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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to strengthen preschool and elementary school teachers' abilities and commitment to working with parents and including them as active participants in the education of their children. It sought to help teachers identify beliefs about involving parents in the classroom and school, and to develop materials and activities to be used in staff development forums that could assist teachers in acquiring skills for working with parents. A program of teacher workshops, activities, and handouts was developed and implemented. Pre- and post-intervention surveys and interviews were conducted to determine the effectiveness of the program. An evaluation of the survey and interview results concluded that the overall effects of the intervention were positive. Teachers increased their awareness of beliefs concerning parent involvement and increased their readiness to reach out and involve more parents. Supervisors reported that teachers improved relationships with parents and that parents exhibited more positive attitudes towards collaborating with teachers. Parents indicated that the practicum addressed a perceived need. (Six appendixes contain teacher workshop agendas, the parent interview survey, a materials evaluation checksheet, teacher survey, and a supervisor interview form. Contains 68 references.) (MDM)

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ED 375 928

Using Staff Development to Improve Preschool/Elementary Teachers' Skills in Working With and Involving Parents

by

Barbara A. Malaspina

Cluster 33

A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1993

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Barbara A. Malaspina under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

22 March 1993
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

Using Staff Development to Improve Preschool/Elementary Teachers' Skills in Working with and Involving Parents. Malaspina, Barbara A.,1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Elementary Education/Early Childhood Education/ Parent Teacher Cooperation/Parent Participation/Program Effectiveness/Inservice Teacher Education/Parent School Relationship

This practicum was designed to strengthen teachers skills in working with and including parents in the schooling of children in a school district. One aim was to help teachers identify beliefs about involving parents in the schools and classrooms. A further aim was to develop materials and activities to be used in staff development forums which could assist teachers in acquiring skills for working with and involving more of the parents with whom they come in contact.

The writer interviewed parents, determined content of staff development workshops, and prepared activities and handouts. Parents and teachers used a materials evaluation checksheet to evaluate the materials to be included in trainings. Two pilot groups and the staff in one elementary school completed pre and posttraining surveys to determine attitudes about parent involvement. The writer planned, developed, conducted and evaluated workshops and interviewed supervisors of participating teachers to ascertain if positive changes and improvements were noted.

The results of the practicum were positive. As reported in pre and post surveys and workshop evaluations,teachers increased awareness of beliefs concerning parent involvement and increased readiness to reach out to involve more and diverse parents. Supervisors reported that teachers' improved relationships with parents and that parents exhibited more positive attitude toward collaborating with teachers. Parents indicated the practicum was addressing a perceived need.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Description of Work Setting and Community

The setting for this practicum is a unified school district in a metropolitan area of a western state. The district serves 13,000 students in 22 schools, preschool through twelfth grade. In addition, the district includes an adult education program with 14,000 adult students and 750 children birth to age five. Due to declining enrollment, the district closed 15 schools in the ten years between 1972 and 1982. As a result, few new employees were hired until 1985. The school district began to expand again in 1992, opening an elementary school and a middle school. As a result of the limited hiring for an extended period, the age of the teaching staff is older with 172 out of 629 contracted teachers nearing retirement. A little over 27% of the district teaching force is 55 years old or older. Adding teachers 48 years and older brings the percentage to over 50% of teachers at mid-career or beyond. The kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) portion of the unified school district is considered by most district staff to be the real

system. However, K-12 staff tend to consider non-K-12 programs to be alternative education and of less value. Perhaps the K-12 staff behave in this manner because such programs are unfamiliar and unlike the traditional programs.

The population of the schools has changed with substantial increases in multilingual, multiethnic minorities. During the past two decades, upwards of 50 different spoken languages have been represented within the student population. As with many other western metropolitan areas, the community is shifting from a white majority to a population of minorities as the majority. There is a mix of recent immigrant populations with a variety of previous educational levels. There are also more established populations with strong cultural values and practices. The student population of the district is very different from the district student population of the 1970s and earlier. The structure of families in the community and in the school district has also undergone changes in the past two decades. Today there are more two working parents and single parent families. The number of teen parents in the community has increased. The cost of housing in the county has escalated drastically since the mid-70s and early 1980s. A typical house costing $50,000 in 1975 now costs anywhere from $275,000 to $300,000 depending on the size of the lot on which it sits. Rent for a basic apartment is $850 per month on the low end to $1200 per month as a median rental price.

The school district serves primarily middle and lower middle class families. County studies estimate it takes a wage of $13 per hour to support a family with two children in a two parent combined income or single parent income household. Parents work long hours limiting the available time to participate in activities related to their children's schooling. The district completed establishing before and after school child care programs at 11 elementary schools in 1992. The district worked with outside vendors at four additional sites to meet parent and school requests for child care support.

Teachers have received little training about the more recent immigrant groups and have limited knowledge of diverse cultural values with which children come to school. Teachers have received little training about families that do not represent the families portrayed in the television ideal families. Many teachers remember the more traditional families encountered in the late 50s and early 60s as the teachers began teaching.

A national research push (Williams & Chavkin, 1986, 1989; Epstein, 1987; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Haley & Berry, 1988; Henderson, 1987; Swap, 1990; Swick, 1991; and many others) has indicated that parents' involvement in the schooling of their children increases children's success in school. The state school board has passed a policy requiring all school districts to have a policy and an implementation

plan for parent involvement. State legislation was passed in January 1991 similar to the board policy. The state Department of Education recently released a strategic plan for parent involvement. The federal Chapter I changes which went into effect in 1988 added impetus for schools to incorporate parents into educational planning and classroom practices. Surveys conducted at some schools within the district have pointed out teachers' frustrations. Teachers question what parent involvement should be and how teachers should work with the new families entering the schools. There seems to be a longing for what used to be with children and families in the schools.

The school district's adult education division does have a parent education program which serves 2,000 parents and 750 children, birth to age five each year in classes designed to involve parents in children's learning and to provide support on family issues. Adult education programs are not considered to be part of the school district by many district K- 12 staff. Additional adult education classes in parenting are provided through other program areas for specialized parenting needs: A Young Parents' Center for teen parents and English as a second language (ESL) for parents who are not native English speakers. District child development programs which include state funded preschools and preschool and schoolage child care programs have mandates for providing parent education and involvement. District K-12 staff

perceive staff of child development programs to hold lesser credentials (even when the same credentials as K-12 has are held) and thus to possess less credibility. Categorical programs such as Chapter I, Indian, and Migrant education managed by the district Special Projects Department also have mandates for providing parent education and involvement. Although more integrated into the K-12, the Special Projects Department programs have been perceived as the locations where teachers can send the divergent students, rather than as resources for K-12 staff. Resources for parent education and involvement which are present in the school district through adult education, child development programs and the Special Projects Department are underutilized by district K-12 staff.

Adult education in cooperation with the Special Projects Department has secured grant funds to develop a program which focuses on the family as a unit to increase success of both the parent as a parent and breadwinner and on the child as a learner in school. The program, called Even Start, has been integrated into five district elementary schools. Additional resources are being sought from other funding sources to provide similar programs at other district school sites. Such efforts were determined by the Special Projects Department and adult education as ways to collaborate at the school levels to assist K-12 staff and to confront the differences between the regular K-12 programs and the resources of

alternative education programs.

In 1988 the district formed an informal collaboration for parent involvement between the adult education parent education program, the district child development programs, and district special projects. In 1990 a more formalized collaboration was established by creating a committee which consists of teachers, school administrators, and parents, both members of alternative programs and of K-12.

District teachers must implement the district Parent/ School Partnerships policy, the master plan and five year plan to meet state and federal regulations. Minimal teacher input was solicited before plans and policy were enacted due to pressures coming from district administrative changes and to pressures requiring compliance with the changed regulations. Many teachers remain unaware of how to involve and to communicate with parents from diverse backgrounds. More children who have been working with specialty teachers in self-contained, isolated programs are being mainstreamed into regular classes. Thus, there are more teachers with less experience and training with and for diversity being responsible for communicating with more varied families.

The district has cut back on staff at the district level due to cost reduction priorities, so staff development is being handled in a piecemeal fashion. Parent involvement has been identified as a priority in the school district through the master plan process, but parent involvement is

not currently coordinated in any comprehensive district or school site way.

The author's work setting and role

As a result of the restructuring of adult education in July of 1991 to an expanded department known as Educational Options, the author has acquired more and various responsibilities. In addition to the Adult and Community Education responsibilities already held by the author, during the practicum process the author was charged with developing a plan for mainstreaming the one room school house for homeless children to the closest elementary school and developing and implementing the Even Start grant. Additional responsibilities have included continuing to supervise the adult education parent education program, a program under the author's leadership for the past 11 years. The author also has supervised the district child development programs, and has served as Educational Options liaison for staff development to the district.

The author has been assigned collateral duties by the superintendent to be the lead person for Parent/School Partnerships. Collateral duties are part of the superintendent's plan for developing expertise on the part of administrators. Responsibilities for this assignment include taking the lead for the Parent/School Partnership Committee, collaborating with Special Projects Department, where much of the implementation responsibilities for the district master

plan and five year plan for Parent/School Partnerships reside, and assisting the committee in identifying resources to accomplish the master plan. The author acquired added responsibilities in 1991 with the restructuring of adult education into Educational Options. At that time, the author was promoted to Vice Principal and made part of the district management team. Without the aforementioned changes, the author would not have had enough connections to the regular K-12 part of the district to be able to undertake this practicum.

CHAPTER II

Study of the Problem

Problem Description

Teachers in the school district have been obliged to work with more and increasingly diverse families. Single parents, two working parent families, grandparents raising their grandchildren, multiple families living in the same housing unit, teen parents, and dysfunctional families are commonplace. Additionally, the community has become increasingly multilingual and multicultural with immigrant populations recently arrived, second wave migrating families, and more established culturally divergent families. An overlay to this cultural variety is the educational level of the parents which varies from college educated to noneducated or minimally educated, especially for some immigrant parents. The English speaking families are primarily middle and lower middle class.

Teachers are required to implement a policy and plans for Parent/School Partnerships. The state has mandated implementation of policy and plans for parent involvement; the school district created a master plan and five year plan

for Parent/School Partnerships which includes goals, objectives and the components which are to be employed at the individual school sites. Teachers trained to work with diverse families are not in positions to share their expertise because they are undervalued at school sites and working in options programs, not in K-12.

No district inservice training has been specifically directed toward parent involvement. Teachers, especially those at midcareer or beyond, have little incentive to seek inservice training for parent involvement offered outside the district.

Some attempts have been made to provide parent involvement activities within the district (K-12) but only on a minimal level to meet state and federal requirements. The activities have been attended by those parents already involved in their children's education. Many of the schools have acted in a unilateral fashion to plan and provide parent involvement activities without thought of coordinating efforts. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at the district and site levels has tried strategies to recruit diverse parents in the past few years but has met with uneven success. Usually event and program attendance by parents has been more successful than other forms of parent involvement; however, even the attendance at events has not been reflective of the diversity of parents within the schools.

If the situation which existed at the beginning of the

practicum were improved, there would be noticeable increases in involvement of parents, including diverse parents, in the schooling process for children. Teachers in district preschool and kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms would be prepared and confident to work with all kinds of families. Multiple strategies would be utilized by teachers and schools to involve parents in the educational processes for their children. Parents would express positive feelings toward their children's teachers and the schools.

In summary, the problem addressed was teachers who were unprepared for changed families and students in their classrooms and schools. These teachers had limited knowledge and experiences in parent involvement strategies and were unable or unwilling to increase parental involvement.

Problem Documentation

Teacher attitudes.

Informal interviews of teachers conducted at each of the district schools during the 1990-91 school year indicated a feeling of being overwhelmed by the changing families and students currently in the schools. (Exact numbers of teachers responding were not kept but comments made were recorded. Comments were shared by Parent/School Partnership Committee members who conducted the interviews.) Teachers interviewed encouraged the district Parent/School Partnerships

Committee to find commercial programs to fix the divergent families, making them more like families with whom teachers were comfortable. During the interview process, teachers requested information on ways to increase parent involvement.

A May 1989 survey of 70 district preschool, kindergarten and first grade teachers did not report parent involvement as specific training in which teachers had participated. When asked how teachers involve parents, 50% or less of the preschool, kindergarten, or first grade teachers responded by stating they involved parents in a variety of ways at home and in school. When teachers were asked if they provide resources for parents, again, 50% or less provided resources. When asked what teachers would like to see as a result of the Early Childhood Committee's work (the district committee doing the survey), there were comments expressing interest in being able to help parents with children's schooling.

Parent attitudes.

Five Chapter I School Site Councils and the District Chapter I Advisory Committee conducted parent needs assessments in 1989 in preparation for applying for grants with parent involvement components. Needs assessments indicated parents are interested in finding meaningful ways to be included in the schooling of their children. Parents are interested in being invited to participate. Table 1 presents purposes given by parents for learning English. A

number of purposes relate directly to parent involvement.

Table 1

Purposes for Learning English

Purpose	Number of responses
Parents (n = 26)	
To help my children in school	19
To speak with my children's teachers	13
To help my family adjust to life here (in the U.S., in the community)	11
To build my job skills	10
To get the most out of the money I have	8
To help my children stay healthy	6

Parents in child development programs, adult education parent education, and adult literacy for the homeless programs informed teachers about the need to learn how to help their children in school. Also reported to teachers was parental frustration experienced regarding lack of awareness or inappropriateness on the part of K-12 teachers as to how parents can and would help in a parent/school partnership. (Feedback provided to author by approximately 8 - 10 teachers during 1989-90, 1990-91 years when asked, "What kinds of comments do you get from parents about K-12 parent involvement?" and, "Do parents feel they know or are provided information and assistance to help with their children's elementary and secondary schooling?")

Shared attitudes.

Surveys sampling district parents, principals, and teachers at different grade levels were completed by the author and others in 1990-91. Surveys results indicated apprehension on the part of both parents and teachers regarding parent participation in the schools, especially at higher grade levels. The survey questions related to attitudes toward a variety of involvement strategies and whether or not parents should participate. A recent sampling of staff and parents at the five Even Start schools using the same instrument provided similar data.

Changing family.

District demographics as provided in the *Three Year Plan* released in 1989-90 delineate increasing minority populations and decreasing white population. Reports presented at meetings by principals and teachers concerning the changing structure of the families have noted increases in multifamily households, children living in nontraditional family structures, and expanded numbers of working parents.

Staff development for parent involvement/changing family.

In interviewing district office staff, the author was unable to determine if any inservice training had taken place for regular K-12 classroom teachers concerning the changing family. Inservices were offered in the late 60s and early 70s about Mexican-American children and families.

Inservice training had been provided for specialists, teachers and aides working with special populations: English as a second language, Chapter I, special education, migrant and Indian education programs, child development programs, educational options, but it had been uneven and sporadic. Some training was mentioned which took place in the early 1980s about children at risk of dropping out of school; there was some mention of training occurring within the past few years regarding children who may have been exposed to drugs prenatally. However, most training had consisted of awareness level training and focused more on the child than on the family.

In presentations to district advisory committees, to adult educators, to other educators, and would-be educators given by the author at conferences and at the local universities between 1985 and 1991, participants identified frustrations when dealing with the changing family. Also reported by the participants was a lack of knowledge about strategies for including parents, especially the divergent parents, in the education of their children.

Causative Analysis

There seem to be several contributing factors to the problem of teachers being unprepared for changing families and of teachers being limited in their ability to involve

parents in the schooling process. The school district went through declining enrollment--closing schools from 1972 to 1982--with a reduction of over 8,000 students and 250 teachers during that period. Teacher morale was low as many teachers with some years' experience were subject to Reduction in Force (RIF). During that same time, there were great changes taking place regarding families: increased divorce rate resulting in single parent families, increased numbers of mothers joining the labor force (two parent working families), increased numbers of refugees and immigrants, increased numbers of teen mothers keeping their babies, increased substance use on the part of parents contributing to more dysfunctional families.

Since 1982, the number of children entering the school district has stabilized. However, during the same period the cost of living has skyrocketed, especially for housing. This has created stress for families and has hastened the flow of more mothers into the workforce with resultant needs for child care. Until early 1992, the area was in a growth economy with many jobs available which served to attract people to the community even though the cost of living was high.

Many aging teachers in the district who survived the RIF period of the 70s and early 80s, are approaching retirement within the next three to five years. Teachers toward the end

of careers are less likely to adapt to change than are younger teachers (Evans, 1989; Huberman, 1989). The culture of the schools has been controlled by the aging teachers since few new positions have become available. When new positions opened, there were only one or two at a school at the same time. New teachers have not found it easy to bring more recent educational innovations and ideas into the schools, especially related to the changing student and family. Consequently, the pervading influence on the school culture and norms has been overwhelmingly from teachers in the concluding stages of professional life.

Since 1982, education has seen the advent of reform movements focusing on many ways to improve student success. During this period, the district has not recognized the importance of parent involvement as a reform strategy. District interest has been focused on the priorities of time on task, five step lesson plan, a variety of instructional methods, and on coping with increasingly diverse students. Staff development efforts have been primarily aimed at instruction.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The changing family.

The Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) (1989) presented clear data on the way the family structure

is changing. Noted were the increasing minority populations, a small but significant number of very disadvantaged families where the children are at risk in all aspects of their lives, and the growing divorce rate impacting families. Also identified by PACE were a number of additional social changes influencing the changing family structure. In the 80s there were more single parents and alternative living arrangements not necessarily supportive of children. There were increases in teen parents as well as increases in non-English speaking populations. There were increases in substance abuse and in the number of families who were homeless. In addition more mothers were working and more families had no health care.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (1991) provided a similar recap of data about the changing family with comparisons by state. Children's Defense Fund (1990) also described ways in which the family is changing. The Children's Defense Fund utilized national data as did Flaxman's and Inger's (1991) article and the National Commission on Children's (1991) report.

Nickse (1990), in recounting the development of the family and intergenerational literacy movement, described business' perspective concerning the need for improving worker skills and influencing the worker of the future by involving parents in educational experiences with their children. Nickse detailed the changes in the family which have led to business', education's and communities'

involvement with the parent and child.

Olson (1990) pointed out the danger to the schools in continuing to hold to the middle class and the traditional family as a model. This viewpoint serves as a roadblock to dealing with families who actually are part of the schools.

Family support/ effectiveness research.

Kagan (1987) discussed the assumptions which cloud thinking about parents thus interfering with effective parent-school support relationships. One assumption was that schools and parents hold congruent values. Another was that the quantity of direct parent contact with the schools is the most important measure. An additional assumption mentioned was that one model of parent-school relationship meets the universal needs for equity. This view is as impractical as the national perception of the American school system which is seen as being the same across school districts in cities, rural areas, and from state to state.

Powell (1989) in discussing the problems with family support programs noted that old notions are being put into practice today based on what the family used to be. He went on to describe the limited availability of parents to be involved in activities in their children's school lives and the need for new ideas to provide support for parents.

Role of the teacher.

The aforementioned resources listed under changing family described the difficulties faced by schools and

teachers as well in trying to serve the educational needs of children and families. A study by Chavkin and Williams (1985) indicated there is little training given before teachers begin careers and as inservice. Teachers and parents did not agree as to whether parent involvement should include advocacy and decision making. Evans (1989) addressed the teacher at midcareer, the developmental stages of the career, and the difficulties the educational setting presents for revitalizing the teacher. It is more difficult to engage teachers in change if it is dictated from above and if the midcareer position is not taken into account. Huberman (1989) also looked at the development of teachers along the career continuum noting the tendency of teachers toward the end of careers to disengage. Huberman noted that schools as organizations can influence teachers negatively. The climate may foster many teachers disengaging even though they may be at different stages of their careers.

Several authors focused on the changes needed by teachers and in schools. Swick, Hobson, and Duff (1979) emphasized the need for openness on the part of teachers when entering into a learning process in order to develop skills for including all parents in the development of parent involvement programs.

Teachers and schools need to make adaptations in the ways changing families are treated: the poor, the fast-track upwardly mobile, the urban, the multicultural, and the

multilingual (Brooks, 1990; Jenkins, 1981; Morrow, 1989; Pine & Hilliard Jr., 1990; Reed & Sautter, 1990). Tizard, Mortimore, and Burchell (1983), when examining parent involvement programs, noted that few teachers are trained in evaluating previously implemented practices. This results in haphazard, discontinuous attempts, frustrations and negative attitudes.

Greenberg (1989) pointed out the temptation of teachers to trade on professionalism at the expense of working relationships with parents. Feelings of diminished status in society can cause teachers to distance themselves from parents by cloaking themselves with expertise. The assignment of blame to one another by teachers and parents when there are problems with children's learning also creates distance and contradictory environments for children. Identifying the school cultural beliefs, teacher preparation institution beliefs, and the individual teachers' beliefs were also highlighted as important by Greenberg. Identifying racism and classism in the school and self are significant parts of the awareness. This is necessary before working with parents as partners can be successful for teachers and ultimately improve learning conditions for children.

Parent involvement research.

Williams and Chavkin (1989) reported on a variety of studies which indicated parents, including minority parents, want to be involved in their children's education. Also

reported was that teachers felt parent involvement was important but lacked training in how to implement strategies for including parents. Teachers who routinely involved parents were not frustrated by a variety of educational levels of parents. Teachers who did not routinely involve parents were more likely to see differences in educational levels of parents, being more comfortable in involving more highly educated parents and less willing to involve other parents.

Cotton and Wikelund (1989) in reviewing the research on parent involvement reported that "Parents' involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement" (p. 2). Active involvement at school and regular involvement at home provide better results. The earlier involvement takes place in the child's education, the better the results. Providing training and orientation for parents increases likelihood of success. Smaller amounts of training are more effective than comprehensive training programs. Providing a menu of involvement activities allows for the possibility that there will be increased participation of parents.

Epstein (1987) described parent involvement strategies for schools and particularly principals to be aware of and use. She identified five types of parent involvement comparing and contrasting parents' views and school personnel's views of the involvement.

Wikelund (1990) identified a number of common barriers

to effective parent involvement. These included a lack of understanding by schools, teachers, and parents of the nature of parent involvement and of its value. Consequently, due to unfamiliarity with parent involvement research, practitioners tend to limit involvement to traditional activities such as programs and open houses. Barriers also include an absence of preservice education for teachers working with parents, and little provision during the school year for much staff development of any kind, with parent involvement holding a lesser priority than other training. There also may be no clear value for parent involvement on the part of school districts and unions. Teachers may feel undervalued already and see little reason for taking on one more responsibility. School-parent contact usually is in one direction and much of it is negative, happening in response to problems. Social class differences between teachers and parents may interfere. Another barrier may be that teachers have families too and may not wish to be flexible for meeting with parents at the parents' convenience. School personnel may view parents of different socioeconomic classes, or minority groups, as being less able or willing to participate in parent involvement activities. Parents may feel the school creates barriers to participation. Parents' backgrounds and current circumstances may limit their availability and ability to participate with the school.

Barriers to partnerships between parents and schools

were discussed by Swap (1990). She saw barriers falling into categories: practices of separation of home and school, attitudinal barriers, cultural barriers, and logistical barriers. Additional barriers were listed by Zeichner (1991) who looked at the problems associated with adopting restructuring activities involving parents without overhauling how decision making takes place and without defining roles. The goal should be that there is not just artificial consensus created, but clearly identified processes for each group of participants.

Kagan and Holdeman (1989) tied the parent involvement and support efforts being discussed in the schools to restructuring--efforts in changing the culture of the schools to better equalize the positions of teachers and parents for the benefit of children's learning and development. Comer (1987, 1988, 1989) described a long-term school improvement effort dependent on parent involvement, especially in decision making at the school level, to improve the working climate for all involved--staff, parents, and students.

Minority parents/diverse child rearing practices.

Cotton and Wikelund (1989) emphasized the importance of parent involvement for minorities. They viewed it not as a fix it model, as if something is lacking on the part of low income or minority parents, but as a way to accept and respect parents while assisting in the expansion of skills.

Cryer (1988) highlighted the importance of being aware of different cultural views expressed by Asians and Americans regarding parent-child relationships. The parent in diverse cultures was also addressed by Hamner and Turner (1985). They identified similarities and differences but tied the differences more to geographical location, educational and socioeconomical level between parents whatever the cultural group than to the cultural variations themselves.

Hough and Stevens Jr. (1981) reviewed the research on how parents of various cultures, life styles, and economic backgrounds preferred to garner support for parenting and child development knowledge. Interpersonal information resourcing was relied on by many diverse groups with teachers ranked right behind physicians as a consulted resource. Hough and Stevens Jr. went on to point out the role teachers play in sharing the rearing of children and the need for teachers to be positive influences on the families whatever the background or family structure.

The gap between what teachers hold for developmental timelines and the values of developmental benchmarks held by parents of various cultures was addressed by Edwards and Gandini (1989). They pointed out that mothers' expectations are influenced by their background values. Teachers vary in expectations depending upon their backgrounds, their training, and the in and outside classroom experiences they have had with children. The warning to teachers is to be

knowledgeable about their own assumptions and beliefs when working with families from diverse cultures.

Greenberg (1989) focused on the need for congruence between the home and the school for children's self-esteem. She pointed out the need for schools to be willing to change the ways that divergent families have been treated in the past, working to treat all parents with respect no matter what their views. Greenberg stressed that schools need to provide training for teachers in working with parents in partnership relationships.

CHAPTER III

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The goals for the practicum were three-fold and may be summarized as follows: (a) to improve classroom teachers' skills in working with and involving parents, (b) to enable teachers to increase awareness of their own beliefs about parenting and parent involvement, and (c) to increase classroom teachers' awareness of the diversity of child rearing practices and values among the families with whom they come in contact.

The objectives of the practicum were (a) to identify a variety of activities which could be used to increase teachers' awareness of beliefs about parenting and parent involvement, a minimum of two; (b) to identify and provide in written form some of the child rearing practices and values toward parent-child relationships and schooling held by a sampling of culturally and socioeconomically diverse groups and nontraditional families within the school district; (c) to identify activities which could be used to improve classroom teachers' skills in working with and involving

parents; and (d) to involve a variety of parents and teachers of various grade levels in reviewing appropriateness of materials and activities designed to increase teachers' awareness and skills in involving parents using an author designed criteria checklist.

Measurement of Objectives

An author developed form was used with teachers as a pretest to identify the awareness level and values teachers hold for parent involvement. A form using the same questions was used as a posttest to measure changes in teacher beliefs, attitudes and awareness about parent involvement and working with parents, including diverse parents. Initially the author had planned to use an adapted version of a teacher questionnaire developed by Southwest Regional Educational Development Laboratory. The complete questionnaire, while interesting, was too involved to be adapted for use with resistant older teachers. The information in the questionnaire was used as a guide in the development of workshop activities.

A short parent survey was prepared by the author for use in gathering parental views concerning roles of family members and of the school. The survey also sought to ascertain willingness for parental involvement and whether or not teachers make parent involvement available.

Several author developed tools were used to gain

comparison data. The aforementioned pre and posttest format was developed to ascertain what knowledge teachers have about diverse child rearing practices and values of parents within the schools. A criteria checklist was provided to parent and teacher groups which reviewed materials and activities for relevance with respect to diversity issues, usefulness, and worthiness of inclusion in resource packets to the schools and in workshops. A workshop evaluation form was developed for use at the close of workshops to assist with refinements of materials and presentation strategies. Additionally, a short questionnaire was given to the supervisors whose teachers participated asking supervisors to describe any changes in teachers' skills in parent involvement or increases in parent participation at the close of the practicum period.

Results of the measurement of objectives are presented in comparison formats describing the changes from preimplementation surveys to postimplementation for teachers. Results of more open ended comments on surveys and evaluation forms are described. Resources reviewed and incorporated using the criteria checklist were too numerous to include in the practicum. Professional journal articles found in the references, and publications and resource materials of the organizations included with the workshop materials in the appendix proved valuable. The reviewers were able to sort through such materials using the criteria checklist

and to make recommendations for inclusion in school resource packets and for the workshops. Materials identified or designed, piloted, refined and implemented are described and/or included in the appendix. Supervisors' survey responses related to changes in teachers' behavior concerning parent involvement are reported.

A log was kept of the meetings, correspondence, phone calls, comments of participants, principals, parents, district office staff, and resource persons. Information recorded in the log was analyzed monthly to forecast adaptations to practicum which needed to be made, or relevant resources which could be incorporated.

CHAPTER IV

Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

District teachers had been unprepared for the changes in families and students in classrooms and schools. Teachers had had limited knowledge and experiences with parent involvement strategies. Teachers had been unwilling or unable to increase parent involvement. Solutions were sought to address the aforementioned problems, especially solutions which would take into account the nature of the teachers in the school district--many nearing the end of careers.

Articles about working with the nontraditional parent emphasized the need for teachers to become familiar with the culture of the parent, to create an atmosphere of trust, and to demonstrate respect for differences in values parents may have. (Berger, 1991; Coleman, 1991; Escobedo, 1983; Fantini & Russo, 1980; Hamner & Turner, 1985; Kitano, 1980; Lane, 1975; Laosa, 1982; Morrow, 1987; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1990; National School Boards Association, 1988; Powell, 1989).

Henderson, Marburger and Ooms (1986) stressed the

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importance of the school treating parents as "collaborators in the educational process" (p. 29) and the school having a responsibility to include all parents. Fairley (1991) articulated important components for parent involvement which included improving school staff awareness of the needs, concerns, and values of parents as well as improving parental awareness of the way schools operate and provide education.

Building in cultural awareness activities, highlighted by many of the articles reviewed, seemed to be a necessary piece of any solution strategy. Because there had been such an influx of minority families into the district in the last few years coupled with very limited inservice training, activities addressing teacher awareness of various cultural and child rearing values and practices were determined to be key solution components.

Williams and Chavkin (1989) reported that there is a need to provide skill training for teachers in working with minority parents. Nye (1939) described criteria for successful parent involvement which included: (a) providing demonstrated commitment and leadership by the school principal, (b) setting a schoolwide priority for parent involvement, (c) demonstrating a willingness to adjust school time frames to provide opportunities for parent involvement, and (d) providing training to give school staff skills to enlist parent participation.

Chrispeels, Boruta and Daugherty (1988) indicated

teachers need to improve communication with parents to ensure it is two way, and enumerated some strategies for doing so. Cattermole and Robinson (1985) reported that more direct contact with parents by school personnel increased the effectiveness of home and school communication. Swick (1991) identified conditions leading to increased parent involvement which included teacher initiative to involve parents, administrative support, teacher support attitudes, teacher philosophy which supports involvement, and active teacher involvement in professional associations. Teachers participating in specific involvement training and teachers using teaching styles which encouraged parent involvement were also noted as important.

Lamm (1986) stressed the importance of providing assistance to universities and school districts so that parent involvement techniques can be learned through preservice and recertification processes for both teachers and administrators. Lamm also focused on the need to have schools create climates and environments which encourage more parent involvement.

Comer (1987) emphasized the need to train teachers to create positive climates which invite parents to become involved and to build collaborations with parents, breaking down the past practices of alienation and distrust. Lindle (1989) described the differences between what parents view as important in relationships with the schools and what school

personnel believe contributes to positive relationships with parents.

The National Association of State Boards of Education Task Force on Early Childhood Education (1988) encouraged the promotion of accepting school environments which support the self-esteem of parents, promote shared learning on the part of both parent and teacher concerning the child, and engender a smooth transition from home to school for the family entering a child into the school. Also encouraged was behavior which ensures the parent is welcomed to observe and assist in the school as well as activities which develop parent competencies to improve the family condition for the child.

Williams and Chavkin (1986) delineated comprehensive recommendations for improving parent involvement. These included: (a) establishing formal district policies; (b) training not only teachers in parent involvement strategies, but also principals and administrators; and (c) considering parent involvement programs to have developmental layers for both parents and teachers so that as each group grows in skills there are additional ways to become more involved. Also, school districts and schools should hold to the premise that parents are as important to children's school achievement as school personnel and should provide awareness of the necessary roles parents hold in educational decision making.

Wikelund (1990) identified key aspects necessary for

parent involvement: (a) The schools identify parent involvement as a priority, aligning policies, funds, time, materials, training, and other resources to that end; (b) parent involvement goes beyond the school boundaries into the community which must also be united in this effort; and (c) staff, parents, and community members understand roles and are provided training which includes skills to work together effectively. Additionally, two way communication paths are established among all participants, and varieties of culturally appropriate activities and occasions for holding activities are provided. Schools need to undertake multiple ongoing strategies for recruiting parents and community members. These key effected audiences, then, are included as participants in evaluation and adaptation of the program.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1990) continued to emphasize the importance of parent involvement as a component of effective schools. Henderson (1987), Goodsφn, et. al. (1991), Haley and Berry (1988), and Swap (1990) also included parent involvement as key to effective schools.

Williams (1985) addressed the need to consider androgogy as well as pedogogy when planning to involve parents. The androgogy model is important to keep in mind when working with teachers as well, since teachers and parents are both adult learners and respond best when the learning can include control over the information or process by the learner.

Past and present experiences need to be included to enhance the current learning. Application for the current learning activity needs to be transferred to real life and should include a focus toward gaining competency.

Rich (1987a, 1987b) also addressed the need for teachers to treat parents differently than they treat children. Rich addressed the need to establish a climate of mutual respect. Parents have been an underutilized resource by educators in supporting children's education. After initial trials to offer support, if the schools are not receptive, parents usually give up trying to become involved. Lack of consideration for the changing family patterns is another demonstration to parents that the schools do not value them. Notices for days off, conferences, and changes in schedules coming with little advance warning or only in English demonstrate the level of school commitment for parent involvement.

The literature emphasized the importance of training teachers in parent involvement strategies as vital to developing increased inclusion of all parents. Also noted was the importance of developing teacher competence in incorporating multiple ways of involvement. Helping teachers to experience training which gives them control over their learning and where the application can be developed by the teachers in a safe environment seems especially significant to a solution strategy in a school district with aging

teachers nearing the end of their careers.

Description of Selected Solution

It is important for teachers to identify their beliefs with regard to parent involvement. Families have changed. Parenting styles are different from those teachers experienced at the beginning of their careers. By teachers identifying their beliefs about parent involvement, issues with parents may be addressed in a less subjective manner.

The district had already established a parent involvement policy, a master plan and a five year plan without much school site input. Teachers had been asked to implement these plans and policies. Teachers were being asked to participate in establishing parent involvement as a key component of the school site plan. Teachers needed to have permission to identify what they already knew about involving parents and what they still needed to learn.

Teachers have begun dealing with very different families than in the past. Parents of various minority groups and socioeconomic levels do not have the same childrearing practices and values. Teachers not only needed to receive training in parent involvement strategies, they needed to develop an awareness level concerning what families bring with them regarding childrearing practices and values when they send children to school.

In order to enable teachers to feel better equipped to

participate actively in multiple parent involvement strategies, the practicum tasks were to develop teacher training materials and activities to be used at the district or school site levels. The materials and activities could help teachers identify their beliefs about parent involvement. The activities would be designed to develop an awareness level of multiple childrearing practices and the values for schooling and parent-school relationships held by a variety of nontraditional parents in the community. The practicum activities would be designed to be used collectively or in component parts depending on the purposes and time available. Key components for increasing parent involvement in the schools using the practicum activities would be delineated. Some evaluative tools which could be used by teachers and/or school sites to assess parental attitudes and interests toward involvement efforts would be identified.

The author had confidence in this solution based on work with adult learners and their needs for acquiring control over information for which they are held accountable. Also important is the need for midcareer teachers to be provided tools of participation rather than top down directives. School site principals had been asking for resources to help their teachers become more familiar with the parent involvement research. Schools site administrators had requested more information on parent involvement strategies. Teachers had indicated they were frustrated by not seeming to be able

to reach some of the parents of the children in their classes. The district had already adopted policies and plans for parent involvement. Research had indicated teachers do not receive preservice or inservice training for parent involvement which held true for district teachers. The philosophical basis for parent involvement was no longer a fix the defective parent one as it was in the 1960s, but rather a view of parent as collaborator in the schooling of children, with the parent accepted as an equal no matter what his or her educational level or cultural background. District parents had indicated an interest in having a variety of ways to be involved in their children's schooling.

Report of Action Taken

The district advisory groups for categorically funded programs and school site councils were contacted to identify parents willing to discuss views on childrearing practices, values for schooling, and the parent-school relationship. This information plus print resources on the topics were incorporated into resources for the training materials. Activities and materials were developed based on resources located during the literature review which provided information about strategies for increasing parent involvement. Good parent involvement practices already taking place in the district were identified and a resource network established at the district level to maintain

information flow. Schools with special needs such as middle, high schools, and alternative education were identified for future projects. Meetings took place with the district personnel involved in staff development activities to share materials and to coordinate efforts. With a looming financial crisis, the district staff development specialist position was cut for the current year. This meant the staff development function would be delivered in a more sporadic fashion. Sites which wished to use materials and activities or to have material presented were identified so projects could be piloted.

Materials were piloted with at least two audiences rather than the three proposed. A grant was secured during the pilot phase which would allow the practicum materials to be presented as staff development to all elementary schools. It was determined that only one elementary school should be included in the practicum implementation to allow for the rest of the elementary schools to be part of the grant implementation. The grant timeline has forced the implementation of the parent involvement workshops to take place after the practicum ends. An author developed instrument for evaluating activities was used to gain feedback on needed changes. Refinements were made. After revisions were made, one site was used to test materials. Then, materials were incorporated into the parent involvement resources available to the schools, first through the grant

and later for each school site. Follow-up questionnaires completed by the principal or program specialist were used to identify changes in attitudes and increases in parent involvement. Informal conversations with teachers who had participated in the workshops gave further insight as to how the training was incorporated.

Even though the author had determined that the project was a manageable one, the school district continued to undergo massive financial reductions during the period of the practicum. With staff reductions across the district, it was difficult to get commitments and follow through in the early stages of the project. People were fearful of losing their jobs and had little energy to devote after budget cutting sessions toward what they perceived were extra projects . It was difficult getting the names of parents to participate in telephone surveys and more difficult finding them at home to complete the survey.

Along with budget cuts and financial constraints, the district unions, both classified and certificated, did not have easy negotiations. The classified employees settled in May and the teachers settled later. A school board recall was begun in the spring for the three positions which would not be up for reelection in November (four reelection positions). In November, all seven school board positions were filled by new trustees. In such an unsettled environment, it was rewarding to be able to secure any

commitments at all from teachers to participate in inservices and from administrators to find time for staff development. Before the contract was settled, teachers were in a work to rule situation where very little beyond minimal expectations occurred.

Resources were identified which fit with the goals of the practicum and corresponded to information provided by the parent questionnaires. Williams and Chavkin (1986) identified guidelines for parent involvement inservices for teachers. This resource was used as a check in creating the inservice materials for the practicum.

The section on androgogy vs pedagogy (pp. 123 - 131) in Williams (1985), assisted in keeping in focus the importance of treating the teachers as adult learners, especially since the teachers, for the most part, are nearing the close of careers. The Williams resource served as a reminder to capitalize on what the teachers already know and to create experiential learning opportunities that allow teachers to take what they already know, mix with a bit of research, and make applications to their current teaching situations.

Two resources were used in preparing the information portion of the workshops and proved highly valuable to teachers as references. The resources, Liontos (1992) and Wikelund (1990), addressed minority needs and hard to serve

parents. Teachers in the school district increasingly deal with both audiences. Additional resources published by the various groups dedicated to improving home-school relationships were reviewed also.

Activities for the inservice workshops were created to involve the teachers in their learning and to assist them in identifying under which belief systems they were operating in working with parents. Two workshops lasting an hour and a half each were created. The first workshop was designed to: (a) help teachers identify their beliefs; (b) describe their frustrations about the changing families with whom they are dealing; (c) familiarize themselves with current research on parent involvement, types of involvement, barriers to involvement, and successful strategies for involvement; and (d) give them some practice working in groups with various real life simulations to develop successful strategies for improving teacher-parent collaboration for children's schooling. A sample agenda, activities, and resources used for the first workshop may be found in Appendix A.

The second workshop, a natural evolution of the first, was designed to acquaint teachers directly with the variety of goals and beliefs about parenting and the schools held by parents. Teams of two parents each representing various ethnic and cultural groups within the school district were recruited to give very short presentations about their views on the family, parents, children, the school, and teachers.

The second workshop materials and presentation cover parental expectations for children at home, discipline strategies, future goals for children, how children contribute to families, how families spend time together, ways parents feel teachers can best help children, and what parents would like to have in the way of relationships with teachers. Due to scheduling delays, the second workshop will not be implemented until after the end of the practicum period. The presentation teams will be set up at tables in the inservice facility. Groups of four to eight teachers will move from table to table at timed intervals (approximately eight minutes) until all have heard the presentations. Parents will be allowed to bring articles from their culture, if they wish, to display. Teachers may ask questions and, by teaming two parents who have their own variations within the culture, the workshop plans to avoid creating new stereotypes. A rehearsal by the parents has been held and implementation of the second workshop will take place in March and again in April. A sample agenda, directions and activity sheets can be found in Appendix B.

For each workshop, articles and handouts from various resources which were pertinent to the inservices were and will be available for browsing, along with books gathered during the course of the practicum.

Concomitantly to the development of the materials for the inservices and the delivery of two pilot inservices and

one inservice at an elementary school during the course of the practicum, two serendipitous events occurred. The author was appointed to a state Parent Education Task Force, elected chairperson to direct the task force, and to serve as liaison to the state Program Standards Subcommittee. This subcommittee is a collected group to monitor various state task forces' development of program standards and frameworks in a variety of program areas for adult education. The appointment to the task force enabled the author to share resources with recognized parent education experts in the state and to discuss strategies for providing the inservices.

The second event was the arrival of a request for proposal from the state Department of Education for a $15,000 grant to implement early childhood recommendations made earlier by a state readiness task force. Included in the funding possibilities for the grant were parent involvement, developmentally appropriate practices, authentic assessment techniques, and strategies to increase articulation and program continuity for children, preschool through second grade.

An early childhood committee, previously established in the district, for which the author was the chairperson, had secured an earlier grant, done surveys and made recommendations to the school board concerning early childhood education within the school district. After the board recommendations had been made, district level personnel

disbanded the committee and the only ongoing work toward the recommendations had been piecemeal. The author's job responsibilities had been expanded shortly before the arrival of the grant request for proposal to include all district child development programs--preschool, and preschool and schoolage child care programs. After speaking with a few key district level staff who were in offices in late August, the author and staff worked on a proposal for submittal. The proposal was funded. Participating teachers representing a team from each elementary school (one each: preschool, kindergarten, first grade and second grade teacher) will receive stipends for attending four inservice workshops and will receive resource materials which include the parent involvement materials developed for this practicum. The activities developed for the practicum will also be part of the workshops. Additional miniworkshops for elementary principals will be funded by the grant.

During the implementation of the practicum, survey forms and questionnaires were developed. The aforementioned forms were used to gain information and to establish comparison data. Baseline data for the need for this practicum had been established using whatever data could be found from previous surveys given related to the parent involvement topic. Parents were surveyed formally through telephone questionnaires. The collected data was used to create the two inservice workshops and to identify commonalities among

district parents. Participating teachers completed pre and post surveys of beliefs about parent involvement, and a survey form was created for the second workshop which asks about the various cultures represented by the parents presenting the workshop. Originally, the author had planned to use an adapted teacher beliefs survey from the work of Williams and Chavkin. The survey was developed for a study carried out for Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory. It proved too extensive to use for the teachers in the school district. They were resistant to participating in lengthy inservice and in any drawn out project process. This was due to issues in the district at the time distracting teachers: failed negotiations for the teachers' contract and a school board recall and reelection campaign. The age of teachers with a majority being at mid-career and over 27% of district teachers nearing retirement also helped the author see that too many requests for extensive data would end the practicum project. Had circumstances been more favorable, the author would have pursued adapting the Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory Teacher Beliefs Survey. Supervisors completed surveys after the workshops to give feedback about perceived changes as a result of the workshops.

Resource materials were collected and shared with various audiences to determine relevancy and appropriateness. The resource materials were reviewed by parents in various settings: District Advisory Committee, PTA, adult students in

parent education and Even Start programs, and school site councils. Materials were reviewed by coordinators of various programs within the school district interested in parent involvement. Supervisors examined materials previous to the inservices as did selected teachers of appropriate grade levels, principals, and members of the Parent-School Partnership Committee. Materials were shared outside of the school district with the state Parent Education Task Force and other adult education parent educators and supervisors. As the practicum progressed, materials were identified dealing with anti-bias curriculum and multicultural education for children. Many of the ideas in the materials (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Neugebauer, 1992; Saracho & Spodek, 1983; York, 1991) can be applied to reviewing resources about diversity in families as well as children. The print materials validated the checklist used by reviewers to evaluate materials developed in the practicum and assisted in the selection of articles to include as resources for the inservices.

Materials and supplies were purchased by the author or provided through collaboration with the various programs for the inservices. Many of the resource books were purchased for the adult education parent education program or Even Start program and borrowed at the inservice times by the author. Some resource materials, given to participants of conferences or workshops, the author incorporated into the

resource bank. Other resource books were purchased by the author as a result of networking at conferences or in contacts made on a national level.

The workshops took place at various district sites, as close to the participants' normal settings as possible. The author delivered the first involvement workshops and will facilitate the second ones where parents are the primary presenters.

CHAPTER V

Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

One of the goals of the practicum was to improve classroom teachers' skills in working with and involving parents. A further goal was to enable teachers to increase awareness of their beliefs about parenting and parent involvement. An additional goal was to increase teachers' awareness of the diversity of child rearing practices and values held by the families of children in teachers' classrooms. Inservice training and resources were selected as vehicles for meeting the goals of the practicum. Resource materials were identified by teachers, administrators, and parents through a review process using a *Materials Evaluation Checksheet*. Training materials and activities for two workshops were developed. One workshop for preschool and elementary teachers was piloted and implemented within the time allotted for the practicum.

Summary of Findings

In order to meet the goals, a sequence of data gathering processes took place. Parents identified by district staff

were interviewed regarding their views on a)child rearing, b) the schooling process, c) teachers, and d) the relationship with the schools parents felt would be beneficial to their children's learning. Existing materials were gathered for inclusion in workshops; materials were developed for workshops. A criteria checksheet was used by district individuals and committees to review materials for appropriateness. Two pilot workshops were held for educational options staff in the Even Start and the adult education parent education programs. Staff members completed pre and post surveys to identify what was known about parent involvement and to discern attitudes toward diverse parents. The workshop was implemented at an elementary school, and the survey process was again utilized. Workshop evaluations were completed for all workshops to assist in adjusting the workshop materials, format and presentations for the various audiences. Materials were developed for a second workshop. The presentation was rehearsed by parents instrumental to the workshop.

Parent interviews.

Fifteen parents participated in the telephone interviews over a five month period. Each interview lasted approximately half an hour, and parents names were suggested to the author for interviewing based on a request to district staff for diverse parents. Tables 2 and 3 detail the results

of two of the questions asked in the interviews and are representative of the results of the interview process. A sample interview form is found in Appendix C.

Table 2

Parents' Roles as Parents in the Family

Role	Number of responses
Parents (n = 15)	
Provide guidance toward becoming responsible adults	11
Create a loving environment	7
Provide for financial, emotional, physical needs	4
Serve as role models/set the values for family and children	4
Keep the family together	1
Teach child to trust and not give up	1
Set the culture for the child/ provide opportunities	1

Note: Some parents identified more than one role.

Parents interviewed included a teen parent, a working mother in a two working-parent family, a single mother, a mother on public assistance, a mexican-American mother, immigrant mothers, a native-American mother, a mother of an

only child and three mothers of three or more children.

The parents' view concerning the teacher's role in educating children is described in Table 3.

Table 3

Teachers' Roles in Educating Children

Role	Number of responses
Parents (n = 15)	
Help children learn how to learn	7
Set the environment for learning	7
Create a positive classroom climate/ consider the affective domain/show respect	6
Build collaborative relationships with parents	3
Provide for academics and socialization	3
Care that children are learning	3
Help children deal with differences	1
Set a good example, dress appropriately, behave ethically	1

Note: Some parents identified more than one role

The survey of parents was an opportunity for the author to identify the commonalities and uniquenesses in parents participating in the survey. Parents who had had negative experiences with schools and teachers either as students themselves or as parents commented how helpful it was for

them to have someone to whom they could describe their feelings. All parents stressed the need to feel they and their children are respected by teachers. Awareness on the part of teachers of family circumstances and early two way communication were important to building positive collaborative relationships with parents. Parents participating in the survey described specific concerns for the acceptance of their family circumstance. Whether or not parents were working parents, single parents, young parents, parents recently arrived in this country, native American parents, or non-working mothers finding themselves a minority in an area with high cost of living and few other mothers at home during the day, all wished to be accepted as they were. Whatever the family condition or style, parents expressed interest in supporting their children's education.

The survey results validated what Greenberg (1989) emphasized when she stated that parents want to be treated with respect by teachers. The survey assisted the author to look at potential resource materials for staff development training from the parents' perspective and from the perspective of teachers who are not as informed as perhaps they should be concerning their students and the students' families. During the interview process, the parents recounted anecdotes which could be incorporated into training activities.

The survey results also assisted the author in

developing training activities. Sensitivity to parent situations was an important component for awareness building for the workshops.

Materials evaluation checksheet.

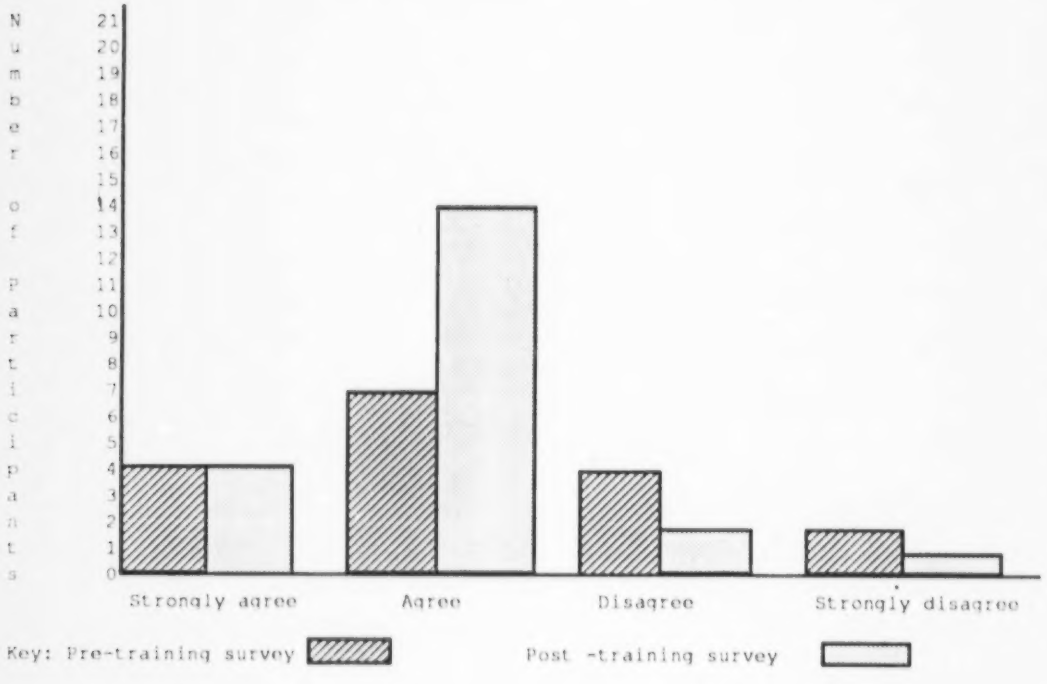
The author-developed *Materials Evaluation Checksheet* was used to evaluate materials to be used in the staff development workshops. The author utilized the form to review potential resources and shared it with many groups including the District Advisory Committee, various staff groups and school site councils. The feedback from the various groups was that the checksheet was a helpful tool to ensure that materials for staff development workshops were balanced. A sample checksheet is located in Appendix D.

Pilot/Implementation -- Workshop One.

The first workshop for training teachers in parent involvement and awareness of beliefs about parents was designed in a one and one half hour format and was presented to three different audiences: (a) Even Start teachers, child educators, and instructional aides, (b) adult education parent education instructors, and (c) teachers of one district elementary school. The workshop consisted of interactive activities and lecturette designed to focus the participants on their current beliefs system and to lead them

toward more inclusive practices. Participants completed pretraining surveys prior to attendance at the workshops, and at the completion of the workshops, they completed both post-training surveys and workshop evaluations. (Appendix E contains a sample pre/post training form.) Altogether, with the two pilot workshops and the one implementation workshop, 42 teachers participated. The workshops were well received. The teachers made positive shifts in attitudes toward a wider definition of parent involvement. Teachers also expressed more responsive attitudes toward parents. The pre and post shift is demonstrated for Question 9 of the survey.(See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Results of Question 9. Teachers need more training in working with parents.



The implementation workshop was more difficult to administer than the pilot workshops. The residual effects of teachers unhappy with working conditions over the past few years (no contract, budget constraints, larger classes, and anger at the school board and superintendent) coupled with the age of many teachers who are nearing retirement, made some teachers more challenging. Asked at the beginning of the workshop if any had attended workshops on parent involvement in the past, only one or two teachers indicated any previous training at all. Providing a sympathetic response to teachers about the lack of previous training and the changing families with whom they are dealing, did enlist buy-in from some teachers. The workshop design created activities which were interactive and concerned with real life situations. The teachers, in this environment, were able to generate multiple solution strategies. The group work was strained at the beginning. As the teachers became involved, they began to consider situations from multiple perspectives which freed them to look at more creative solution strategies.

Follow Up

A questionnaire was completed two weeks after each workshop by the supervisor of each of the three teacher

populations. The supervisors were asked to describe changes they had observed in their staff's ability and/or willingness to work with more diverse parents. The two pilot groups were described as becoming more willing to discuss with supervisors the strategies for sharing information with parents. This was especially true for the more emotionally-ladened topics such as children's behavior, parent roles in the classroom, and separation issues. The elementary school staff were said to be more open in general about relationships with parents. The principal also stated there had been a large turn-out for parent-teacher conferences, this in a school with many low income, culturally diverse families. The elementary principal also reported that parent-teacher conferences were very positive this year. There were no complaints to the principal by parents about teachers, and teachers had not been talking negatively about parents in the staff lounge. A sample of the supervisor questionnaire is included in Appendix F.

Pilot/Implementation of Workshop Two.

A workshop of one and one half hours has been developed to address some of the needs indicated through the parent interviews and by staff of the three programs participating in the first workshop. The concept and format has been presented to the district advisory committee for Chapter I programs and bilingual education programs since the

workshop would need parents to do most of the presenting. The adult education English as a second language higher level classes have also been contacted to recruit parents as presenters. The elementary school and the two pilot groups are ready to participate in a workshop; however, because they have had other pressing issues, the date has been scheduled beyond the completion date of this practicum.

It is difficult to recruit parents who have not felt comfortable in school settings. The district has many working parents who would like to present to teachers but are unable to be available during the afternoon, a preferred time for staff training. The author has a cadre of parents recruited from various ethnic and culturally representative groups within the district. Parents with differing educational levels and lifestyle choices are being recruited also to provide balance. It is anticipated that Workshop Two will be piloted and implemented in March and April.

Results

The goals of the practicum included improving classroom teachers'skills in working with and involving parents. As reported by supervisors, improvement was noted after the workshop. One workshop or two will not be all that is needed to improve teachers' skills with parents. However, teachers were interested and positive about the first workshop and are looking forward to the second. The three

pilot/implementation groups who attended the first workshop made specific applications to relevant concerns.

One further serendipitous improvement has been the requests by individual elementary school site councils for presentations on improving inclusion strategies for parent involvement. These presentations are a direct result of the author's attending the District Advisory Committee and recruiting parents for the second workshop. School site representatives have taken the recruitment materials back to the school sites. The author has subsequently received invitations to present to the school site councils of individual schools. One such presentation has already taken place, loosely based on Workshop One. Materials needed to be adapted since half of the participants were parents. Another presentation is scheduled for a different elementary school in March.

While the materials were being developed a grant became available. The grant allows the staff development materials created for the practicum to be implemented district wide with funds to pay for teachers to receive materials and a stipend for attending workshops. Nine of the fifteen elementary schools will each be sending a team to the training in April. The pilot and implementation have allowed input on the effectiveness of the developed materials so that further refinements may be made before the next implementation.

An additional goal was to enable teachers to increase awareness about their beliefs concerning parenting and parent involvement. The activities which were designed for Workshop One and Workshop Two gave and give teachers an opportunity to explore the values they hold and to look at them from a new vantage point. It was encouraging to hear teachers move from stereotypic reactions to more thoughtful, individualized responses during the course of Workshop One. Workshop Two will create even more of an opportunity for teachers to confront their own beliefs with the views from another perspective. Many researchers had emphasized training teachers to demonstrate respect for differences in values parents hold (Escobedo, 1983; Fantini and Russo, 1980; Powell, 1989).

The activities for both workshops were specifically designed to provide teachers with information and resources to meet the goal of increasing awareness of the diversity of child rearing practices and values held by parents in the schools. The combined resources of articles, activities, and parent input helped teachers identify that they needed to learn more.

One objective for the practicum was to identify a variety of activities which could be used to increase teachers' awareness about their beliefs concerning parent involvement. A minumum of two activities was established as a criterion for successful completion of the objective. Two

separate workshops have been developed. Additional presentations to district committees which include both teachers and parents have been or will be completed. Articles, videos, books, journals and magazines have been identified through a checklist evaluation process for inclusion in workshops and in school resources banks. Throughout the development of the practicum, the author has assisted programs and school sites by creating resource banks for parent involvement.

The second objective was to identify and provide in written form some of the child rearing practices and values toward parent-child relationship and schooling held by a sampling of parents representative of the district population. Parents recruited and yet to present represent native Americans, Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, Latinos, African Americans, Southeast Asians, middle Easterners and others. The author is working with the PTA to take over this "Speakers' Bureau" after the practicum has ended. Organizations representing many cultural groups have been included in a resource list provided in the workshops. Specific articles dealing with various lifestyle and cultural groups have been included either as handouts or as resources to be shown at the workshops.

Objective three has been addressed above: Identify activities which can be used to improve classroom teachers' skills in working with and involving parents. Objective four

was to involve a variety of parents and teachers in reviewing the appropriateness of materials and activities. Each of the pilot implementations of Workshop One was tailored to specific staff. The situations which were used for problem solving were developed after interviewing supervisors. Before the simulations were implemented, they were again evaluated for relevancy by the supervisors. Since the Parent/School Partnership Committee was not holding formal meetings, other parents and teachers were used either in group settings or as individuals to review materials and activities using the evaluation checklist.

Conclusions

The practicum, using staff development to improve preschool and elementary teachers' skills in working with and involving parents, has served as a catalyst to reactivate the district's dormant Parent/School Partnership master plan. In school districts which are experiencing major upheavals, it is sometimes quite difficult to keep the momentum going on projects, even if many people feel the projects are important. The district had stalled after establishing a policy for parent involvement and developing a master plan. There have been many changes and some unpleasantness in the school district in the past two or three years. The staff members of the Parent/School Partnership Committee have either left the school district or taken on new roles.

The practicum workshops have generated renewed interest in improving teacher-parent relationships. Experienced teachers who have the opportunity to actively participate in tailor-made workshops can acquire skills and put them into practice. Parents who are treated with respect and invited to share their perspectives with teachers will do so.

Developing a variety of resources to implement change allows the change process to be shared by many people. The PTA has been waiting for a more positive climate in the district to move forward with more parent involvement. Teachers who have acquired some skills can more easily determine what other skills may be needed. Teachers have been calling the author requesting direction toward additional resources. The author has found herself serving as a clearinghouse for resources identified through the practicum process.

Although the project has been well received, and supervisors have determined that teachers have improved their skills working with and involving parents, the implementation of the practicum has been uneven. When teachers are working to rule, it is not practical to plan inservices, nor is it practical to try to enlist teachers' support for projects.

Conditions warranted planning for delays. The elementary teachers as part of a bargaining unit became very difficult to access. After the contract was settled,

contracted teachers in the district began campaigning to recall the school board and elect a new board. The time was not propitious for asking extra time of teachers.

The district has had principal turnover at many schools. The effects have been both positive and negative. Last year, when the retirees left, not only were new principals appointed, but other principals switched schools. It takes time to build up trust between principal and staff so inservice programs can be offered. However, many of the new principals and also the principals new to their schools are very supportive of parent involvement. It has been difficult with the changes in principals to plan for inservice programs even though the interest exists.

Recommendations

It is very important to know what can be done and can not be done when the political setting is in upheaval. With a practicum, the clock ticks on so there is not an opportunity to set aside projects until a better time. Even the best projects will not be valued if the climate is unfavorable.

The practicum project, using staff development to improve preschool and elementary teachers' skills in working with and involving parents, has just been a beginning. The workshops have been well received and there is increasing interest on the part of principals, teachers and parents.

The resources gathered and the activities used in the workshops can be easily replicated in various settings with different audiences. More specific skill building activities should be pursued such as communicating with parents, involving parents in school decision making and governance, and encouraging home learning activities.

It is important to recruit others to begin picking up some of the next activities to keep momentum going. Parents seem particularly interested in participating either through the PTA or school site councils.

Outside grant funds will help implement the practicum across the district. Grants allow for funds for materials and staff time to facilitate the implementation. Also, grants can provide the extra incentive for some staff to take on added responsibilities which lead to growth.

Dissemination

Information has been disseminated internally throughout the district through presentations, principals' meetings, and informal conversations. Externally, information about the project has been disseminated through the state adult education parent education network, through professional organizations, through the author's chairpersonship of the State Parent Education Task Force, through the Child Development Division of the State Department of Education, and in informal communication with parents and professionals

of other school districts and community colleges.

The author will begin to make presentations at conferences about the project after the implementation of Workshop Two and the completion of the grant-funded workshop. Since the project validated much of the research others have done about the relationship of teachers, the training they have received and parent involvement, a journal article about the project may also be written.

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APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP ONE
AGENDA AND ACTIVITIES

Working With and Involving Parents

Preschool, Kindergarten and Elementary Grade Teachers

A project to identify beliefs about parent involvement and increase knowledge of and strategies for parent involvement

Agenda

Introductions

What is a "good" parent?
(Activity 1)

The Changing Family
(Activity 2)

Basic Assumptions about Parent Involvement
Overcoming Barriers to Parent Involvement
Essential Ingredients for Parent Involvement
(Lecturette , audience involvement where possible ; source material--Wikelund, 1990; Liontos, 1992)

Getting Parents Involved
(Activity 3)

Resources
(Packet with assorted resources, references, including free or inexpensive from National PTA and other groups)

Questions/and Answers

Evaluation of Workshop

Approximate time of workshop: 1 1/4 - 1 1/2 hours

Activity 1.

What is a good parent ? What does he or she look like as a parent?

Please list below some of the qualities you identify which make a parent a "good" parent. Be prepared to share your list.

For Presenter:

After initial introductions, pass out sheet with what is a good parent question. Ask participants to work alone to jot down the qualities they have identified in a good parent. (approx. 5 minutes).

When participants have completed the task, solicit responses which you record on a flip chart. (The responses will generally indicate typical middle class values)

ASK: "Would you consider a mother living with her two children in a homeless family shelter a good parent?"

"Would you consider a single father who works two jobs to support his three children a good parent?"

"Would you consider an immigrant parent who requires her six year old to do three hours of school work each afternoon/evening a good parent?"

"Would you consider a mother who requires her children to participate in cultural/religious activities every weekend and sometimes during the week a good parent?"

"Would you consider a college educated working parent who chooses to spend an hour when he returns from work with his child reading and telling stories rather than completing the child's assigned homework a good parent?"

"Would you consider a non-English speaking/reading parent who teaches her daughters the household skills of her culture, cooking, handcrafts, a good parent?"

"Would you consider a teen mother who gave birth to her kindergartener when she was 13 who is unable to participate at school activities because she herself is a student finishing up her high school diploma a good parent?"

PRESENTER: " Of course you cannot tell by just the information I have provided whether or not a particular parent is a good parent. You would need additional information to make any judgments about the quality of parenting of the parents I've just described. You cannot make quick judgments from a limited amount of information."

For the presenter:

Say:

The majority of parents are intent on being "good" parents. They want what is best for their children. It is important that teachers keep in mind that there is no one right way to be a good parent and many parents define good parenting in a way different than perhaps teachers do.

What are some of the variations on families with whom you are currently working? (List on flip chart or use overhead transparency to create list) (Approximately 10 minutes)

We will keep this list and refer back to it throughout the rest of our time together.

Activity 2

The Changing Family

Single Parents

Teen Parents

Two Parents Working

Step Parents

Grandparents Parenting

Divorced Parents

Older Parents

Neglecting Parents

Interracial Families

etc.:

Immigrant Families

Non-English Speaking Families

Poor Families

Homeless Families

Abusive Families

Incarcerated Parents

Substance Abusing Families

Gay Families

Activity 3 Approximate time 20 minutes - 45 minutes

Getting Parents Involved -- Group Problem Solving

Divide the participants into five to six teams of 4 - 6 people (adapt numbers for various sizes of groups). Try to mix teachers of primary and intermediate grades, male and female teachers, experienced and less experienced on each team.

Give each team one of the prepared situations requesting they use the information presented and their own ingenuity to come up with solution strategies to involve and support parents in the situations given.

Have each team select a recorder and a reporter. The recorder will write down ideas which the group generates. The reporter will report out to the larger group at the close of the activity.

Presenter sets ground rules : everyone participates, each person's ideas of value to the group, one idea can build on another, no criticism of other's ideas. Presenter facilitates if necessary and moves between groups to monitor progress. Call time warning five minutes before close of activity. Encourage groups to prioritize solutions if there is time. Presenter calls on reporter for each group to share solution strategies after reporter or another member of group reads the situation. Presenter supports teams' efforts, asks key questions for clarification.

Situation 1

You have parents in your class from various cultures, some recently arrived from other countries. You notice some difficulties with conflicts between your discipline program and the manner in which parents are disciplining their children at arrival and dismissal times. How would you handle the situation without alienating the parents?

Situation 2

One of the children in your class has begun acting up on the playground daily. You have tried various approaches for improvement with minimal success. You know that the child's father is in county jail currently and the mother has been hostile to the school when approached in the past. You need to enlist help from home to resolve difficulties at school. How can you support the mother while gaining her assistance to improve the child's behavior at school?

Situation 3

It has come to your attention that two children in your class are technically homeless (living in a car alternating with staying in motels on a week to week basis). You have typically sent home written requests to families to provide snacks, book club monies, "found" resources for art projects, field trip monies and/or lunches. The families of the two children in your class have not responded to any requests. How can you involve these parents in supporting their children's schooling and solve the difficulties created for the children by not being able to do what other children are able to do in response to routine teacher requests?

Situation 4

You have a child in your classroom who is hurting other children. You and other school staff have been working on the problem, but parents are beginning to complain. How will you handle this situation so the complaining parents feel they have been heard, and the parent of the child who is hurting others feels supported?

Situation 5

You have a child who has just arrived from overseas and been entered into your classroom. The child speaks no English, and the district Newcomer class has no openings. Everyday, mother walks the child to school and picks the child up. Mother is having difficulty separating and hangs around waving good bye, coming early to pick up the child and tapping on the window which distracts the other children. Mother speaks a little English but you have been unable to explain procedures clearly to bring an end to the distracting behavior. How can you help the parent deal with the separation issue in a way which improves the situation and supports the parent?

Situation 6

You have secured agreements from most parents to support your homework program this year. One particular parent has refused to participate in the homework program and has angrily called you to protest what he called "harassing his child at school" because you have been seeking the signed agreement for the past week. How can you get at the issues and turn around this situation so both you and the parent are on the same team, working together to support the child?

APPENDIX B

WORKSHOP TWO
AGENDA AND ACTIVITIES

Working with and Involving Parents From the Parents' Perspective

Preschool, Kindergarten and Elementary Grade Teachers

A project to identify beliefs about parent involvement and to increase knowledge of and strategies for parent involvement

Agenda

Introductions

The Importance of Building a Team for Children's Success in School

Parents' Views on:

- Child's Role in the Family
- Parents' Role in the Family
- Expectations for the Child at Home
- Expectations for the Child at School
- What the Parent Would Like from the School for Child and Family

(a Focus Group presentation/interaction)

Wrap Up

Activity: Approximately 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours

From the Parents' Perspective

After the initial introductions of group leader and guest parents, the teachers will count off by the number of parent teams who will be presenting, at least five or six set up at small tables. The teachers will start by going to the table with their number. The parents at each table will present for eight minutes about the preassigned topics related to roles of children and parents in the family, beliefs about schooling, expectations for children's schooling, or any other specific interest negotiated at time of planning for workshop. At the eight minute mark, time will be called and teachers will rotate to the next table in the sequence, staying again for eight minutes for the parent presentation. Teachers rotate every eight minutes until they have heard all parent presentations.Teachers may ask questions as there is time.

Parents will have completed some data sheet (samples included here) to give to teachers as they visit table. Materials from culture may be provided by parents to enrich the presentation if appropriate.

At end of rotation, teachers will again assemble as group and the wrap up will gather some perspectives from both teachers and parents as to the activity. Any additional questions will be answered.Thank yous will be expressed to parents who have participated.

Teachers will complete a workshop evaluation.

For Your Information, Teacher

In our family, schoolage children at home are expected to:

When children misbehave, the following are typical discipline strategies:

The following are the most important reasons for my child to do well in school:

My child(ren)'s contributions to our family include:

Our family spends time together in the following ways:

The ways the teachers can help my child(ren) best are:

As a parent, I would like the teachers to:

In my Culture/Life Style

The Family:

Parents:

Children:

The School:

Teachers:

The identified culture/lifestyle is_____

APPENDIX C

PARENT INTERVIEW SURVEY FORM

PARENT INTERVIEW

Interviewee_____ Date_____
Number of Child(ren)_____
Ages of Child(ren)_____
Married____ Single_____ Never been married_____

Interviewer_____

This project is designed to gather information for developing teacher training materials to encourage teachers to increase their skills in involving parents in their children's learning, education, schooling. Many teachers do not have information about the various cultural and lifestyle values for parenting and child rearing held by families within the school district. Most of us are most familiar with our own or our own family's values and practices.

Please share your view on the following questions. The information will remain anonymous; your name and any identifiers will remain confidential. Results of the interviews will be used to create teacher training materials for parent involvement which reflect the diversity of parents within the school district. There are no right answers, so please feel comfortable sharing your views.

1. What do you see is the parent's role in the family?

2. What do you see is the parent's role in the education of child(ren)?

3. Describe your children's roles and responsibilities in the family.

4. Describe your views concerning discipline of:

   a. Toddlers:

   b. Preschoolers:

c. Elementary schoolers:

d. 11 - 13 year olds:

e. Teenagers:

5. At what age are children expected to assist with chores in your family? What types of chores?

6. What do you see as your most difficult job as a parent?

7. What do you see is the teacher's role in educating your children?

8. What do you expect from the teacher in relation to you, the parent?

9. If you were invited to participate with the school, or the teacher in your children's schooling, how would you respond? What would you be most comfortable doing?

10. What would you like your children's teacher to know about your children and your family?

Thank you for your assistance.

APPENDIX D

MATERIALS EVALUATION CHECKSHEET

Reviewer:_____ Date:_____

Materials Evaluation Checksheet

The materials to be evaluated for inclusion in workshops/inservices dealing with cultural/ethnic/lifestyle diversity have been reviewed against the following criteria:

A. Demonstrate respect for diversity
B. Do not reflect stereotypic beliefs concerning culture, gender, age, sex roles, disability, lifestyle choice, economic status
C. Expand information and are worthy of inclusion
D. Provide accurate information
E. Cultural and ethnic resources describe American settings, rather than a travelog approach
F. Other:_____

Please list article reviewed below and check off A - E the criteria appropriate.

Title of Article/Resource	A	B	C	D	E	F

APPENDIX E

PRE AND POSTTRAINING SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Pre/Post-Training Survey

What Do You Believe About Parent Involvement?

Please mark below to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

Opinions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Teachers should invite parents to help in the classroom. . .	1	2	3	4
2. Parents involvement should be restricted to helping children at home. . . .	1	2	3	4
3. Parent involvement includes getting children to school on time, well rested, and fed.	1	2	3	4
4. Parents have a role in school/ program decision making and advocacy.	1	2	3	4
5. All parents should feel welcome in the school setting.	1	2	3	4
6. Serving as an audience for school events is parent involvement.	1	2	3	4
7. Parents have important information to share with teachers about their children. . .	1	2	3	4
8. Teachers and parents should communicate frequently	1	2	3	4
9. Teachers need more training in working with parents. . .	1	2	3	4
10. Parents generally are not interested in being involved.	1	2	3	4
11. Parents are an important resource for teachers. . . .	1	2	3	4

Thank you for completing this survey.

APPENDIX F

SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW FORM

Supervisor Interview/Questionnaire

DATE:_____ INTERVIEWER:_____

PERSON INTERVIEWED:_____ JOB TITLE:_____

Now that your teaching staff has had the opportunity to use the workshop information, please answer the following:

1. What changes have you observed in your staff's ability and/or willingness to work with more diverse parents?

2. What specific activities planned or implemented by your staff indicate an application of the workshop information?

3. Do you feel the workshop increased teaching staff's skills in working with and involving parents in their children's schooling? Yes___ No___
Please explain:

4. What are some of the next steps your staff plans to take to increase parent involvement?

5. What are some additional skills you would like to see your teaching staff acquire to further parent involvement?

Thank you for participating in this project.